

FOR INFORMATION OF UNITED NATIONS

Not for Distribution or Dis

16 May 1988

PRESS BRIEFING BY UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL DIEGO CORDOVEZ

At a press briefing this afternoon, Under-Secretary-General Diego Cordovez, Representative of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on the Settlement of the Situation relating to Afghanistan, said in an opening statement that the Secretary-General was very satisfied with the way the implementation process concerning the Geneva Accords had started.

Mr. Cordovez stated he wished first to clarify that the group of officers in Kabul and Islamabad was a highly mobile one and would be deployed on a functional basis to address the specific requirements of particular situations. Personnel had been assigned to the good offices mission; they had not been assigned to one place or another. For security and other reasons, there would never be public disclosure of their actual locations. The only two persons who had a continuing assignment were the heads of the two headquarters units: an Austrian colonel in Islamabad and a Swedish colonel in Kabul.

General Rauli Helminen, Deputy to Mr. Cordovez on the settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan, was moving between Kabul and Islamabad all the time and was assisted by Benon Vahe Sevan, Director and Senior Political Adviser. They had been provided with a jet aircraft which allowed them to move as was necessary.

Mr. Cordovez said that a statement had been issued simultaneously in Islamabad and Kabul by General Helminen (Press Release AFG/5) on Saturday, 14 May. General Helminen had requested assurances from both Governments of their intentions and readiness to implement the obligations of the Geneva Accords. "The assurances given to us were very full, very satisfactory", said Mr. Cordovez. General Helminen had been in Kabul yesterday, 15 May, when the withdrawal of troops had started in accordance with the Geneva Agreements and had been given very full and satisfactory information about the plans for withdrawal. He had been briefed by a senior Soviet military official, not the same officer who had been quoted in the press.

On 15 May, General Helminen had then sent 10 military officers, reflecting all the nationalities of those assigned to the good offices mission, to Jalalabad to observe the beginning of the withdrawal process, Mr. Cordovez continued. This showed that alleged restrictions or problems with deployment of certain nationalities did not in practice exist. The 10 officers had observed the beginning of the departure of Soviet troops that had moved towards Kabul; from there the troops would proceed to the Soviet Union. It would not be appropriate to indicate the precise departure plans, but he could say that full assurances had been given that the United Nations would observe the operation, and United Nations military officers would be on the Afghan-Soviet border. "They will be at whatever location we consider necessary throughout this process", he stated.

16 May 1988

United Nations military officers had also visited on 15 May a number of locations in the frontier regions of Pakistan, and in Pakistan also there was a real determination to implement the Accords as envisaged in the documents.

All the logistical aspects of the operation were virtually complete, and the two headquarters units were functioning smoothly, he said. The two civilian political advisors, one for each unit, would be on station shortly, and 30 to 40 civilian staff were assisting the military officers. The communications equipment was not yet fully operational but would be by 20 May.

The important thing to stress was that, based on the statement of 14 May and the events of 15 May, it was quite obvious that the agreements had been negotiated in good faith, and the intention on both sides to implement them in good faith had been reaffirmed, Mr. Cordovez said. He would try to keep correspondents informed, but there were very sensitive aspects of the situation that could affect the security of United Nations personnel, and he had to be careful regarding specific information. The 50 military officers were now on the ground, but could be returned to their regular United Nations assignments if all of them were not needed. They could be brought back within 48 hours if necessary.

To several questions regarding alleged violations, such as weapons and equipment shipments, Mr. Cordovez said he would be guided only by reports from General Helminin on such matters. All the necessary provisions had been made to ascertain whether all aspects of implementation of the agreements were being fulfilled. "I hope there will be no violations", he said. He would travel to the area when it was necessary. Officers of UNCOMAP comprised nationals from all the contributing countries: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, Ghana, Ireland, Nepal, Poland and Sweden.

In reply to other questions, Mr. Cordovez said the United Nations military officers around the frontier regions of Pakistan had been observing that preparations necessary for compliance with the Agreement had been made. The Agreement provided for certain obligations, some of which were reciprocal, while others were not. The United Nations operation in Afghanistan was a "good offices mission" and was essentially a continuation of the good offices mission provided by the Secretary-General during the negotiating period -- an "implementation assistance scheme". The principles and practices of extreme discretion, which had been very useful for the successful completion of the negotiations, would be adhered to.

To other questions, he said he intended to keep in touch with all parties concerned in accordance with the terms of the good offices mission. His recent discussions in Washington in that regard had been most helpful, and he would meet with General Helminen in Geneva during the week of 23 May. Mr. Cordovez added that he would also probably meet with Governmental representatives to review implementation arrangements. Very highly developed communications equipment would be provided for communications between Kabul and Islamabad, between those two cities and New York and between field locations and the two headquarters units.

A comprehensive settlement, a real peace in Afghanistan, was now essentially in the hands of the Afghans, he said. The Geneva Accords had

(more)

16 May 1988

settled the external aspect of the crisis, but the internal aspect of the problem, such as the type of Government, had to be decided by the Afghans. Internal communications lines had been disrupted; families had been divided; and Mr. Cordovez had been asked in his personal capacity to facilitate communication among the Afghans themselves. Troops were being withdrawn, and refugees were starting to return. He hoped that the Afghans would seize a historic opportunity given to them to achieve peace.

To other questions, Mr. Cordovez said the Agreements said that one of his functions was "to find solutions to specific problems that may arise during the implementation period". He would discuss such situations on a case-by-case basis. The Agreement was not absolutely perfect, because during the negotiations one could not anticipate all the problems that would arise in the implementation process. A statement that he had been authorized to read out in Geneva had stated that the desirable government for Afghanistan was a broad based government, involving all segments of Afghan society who were now living both inside and outside the country.

Asked to describe the relationship between his responsibilities and those of Sadruddin Aga Khan, the Co-ordinator for United Nations economic and social assistance in Afghanistan, Mr. Cordovez said his operation was connected exclusively with the political and military aspects of the Geneva Accords and their implementation. He had met with the Co-ordinator as soon as he had been appointed, and Sadruddin Aga Khan would be doing something absolutely essential, as Afghanistan would require a lot of economic and social assistance.

"Lots and lots and lots of money had been used in weapons; we hope that now an equally significant amount of money is going to be given to insure peace", Mr. Cordovez concluded.

★ ★★ ★